

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINR, EC
SUBJECT: MILITARY GOOD FAITH QUESTIONED AND REASSURED

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN THE PAST TEN DAYS SOME DOUBTS HAVE ARISEN AMONG SOME ECUADOREAN POLITICIANS ABOUT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS TO FULFILL THE RETORNO PROCESS. ON MARCH 21 SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT GONZALO KAROLYS BLASTED POLITICIANS AND MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT JARRIN COMMENTED THAT IF RETORNO FAILS IT WILL BE DUE TO CIVILIAN POLITICIANS WHO HAVE NOT RISEN TO THE OCCASION. THOSE COMMENTS, PLUS ANOTHER BOMBING, GENERALLY BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN THE WORK OF CERTAIN ELEMENTS WITHIN THE MILITARY, HAVE BEEN INTERPRETED AS SHOWING THAT THERE IS STILL INTEREST IN SOME QUARTERS TO DERAIL THE PROCESS. THE SECRETARY GENERAL FOR THE ADMINISTRATION INSISTED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE ON MARCH 27 THAT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD ON SCHEDULE JULY 16. DESPITE DOUBTS RAISED BY THE JARRIN AND KAROLYS STATEMENTS, MOST POLITICIANS APPEAR TO BELIEVE THAT RETORNO HAS GAINED A MOMENTUM THAT IS NOW IMPOSSIBLE TO BREAK. END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE PAST TEN DAYS A SERIES OF EVENTS HAS OCCURRED
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WHICH HAS RAISED CERTAIN DOUBTS ABOUT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S REAL INTENTION TO RETURN THE COUNTRY TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT AND HAS PERSUADED POLITICAL OBSERVERS THAT THERE REMAIN CERTAIN ELEMENTS WITHIN THE MILITARY THAT WOULD PREFER TO RETAIN POWER INDEFINITELY RATHER THAN SEE THE SUCCESS OF THE RETORNO PROCESS.

3. ON MARCH 21 ON SEPARATE OCCASIONS BOTH MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT COL. BOLIVAR JARRIN AND SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT GONZALO KAROLYS MADE REMARKS WHICH CREATED DOUBTS ABOUT THE GOE'S GOOD FAITH AND RESULTED IN STRONG CRITICISM FROM POLITICAL LEADERS. KAROLYS COMMENTED THAT POLITICAL PARTIES ARE IN A SHAMBLES AND THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF POLITICIANS IS MOTIVATED BY SORDID PERSONAL AMBITION. JARRIN MADE A VAGUE STATEMENT THAT IF THE PLAN TO RETURN TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT FAILED IT WOULD NOT BE DUE TO THE MILITARY BUT RATHER TO POLITICIANS WHO HAD NOT RISEN TO THE OCCASION. NEITHER OF THESE COMMENTS IS UNCOMMON IN ECUADOR, BUT TAKEN TOGETHER, GIVEN THEIR TIMING, AND CONSIDERING THEIR SOURCES, THE COMMENTS WERE READ BY MANY AS AN INDICATION THAT CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WANT TO RETAIN POWER AND BLAME THE FAILURE OF RETORNO ON IRRESPONSIBLE POLITICIANS.

4. ADDING TO THE COLLECTIVE UNCERTAINTY DURING THE SAME WEEK WAS THE GOE'S FAILURE TO REPLACE THE RESIGNING MEMBERS OF THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL. THIS PROBLEM WAS POINTED OUT IN AN EMBARRASSING MANNER WHEN FRA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ABDON CALDERON APPEARED AT THE TRIBUNAL'S VACANT OFFICE WITH THE 30,000 SIGNATURES REQUIRED BY THE ELECTIONS LAW IN AN EFFORT TO LEGALLY REGISTER HIS PARTY. SEVERAL POLITICIANS SAW IN THE

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FAILURE TO RECONVENE THE TRIBUNAL A LACK OF SERIOUSNESS THAT COULD BE DERIVED FROM A DESIRE OF SOME MILITARY TO RETAIN POWER.

5. PERHAPS THE MOST SERIOUS CAUSE OF CURRENT SUSPICIONS WAS THE MARCH 28 BOMBING OF THE HOME OF A GUAYAQUIL POLITICAL POLLSTER. ON MARCH 26 BUCARAM'S CFP STRONGLY IMPUGNED THE RESULTS OF A GUAYAQUIL POLL WHICH INDICATED THAT SIXTO DURAN-BALLENA AND LIBERAL FRANCISCO HUERTA LEAD THE CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL RACE, WITH CFP CANDIDATE JAIME ROLDOS RUNNING ONLY THIRD. THE CFP, NOTING THAT THE POLLSTER WAS AN EMPLOYEE OF FEDESARROLLO, THE GUAYAQUIL THINK-TANK RUN BY HUERTA, CLAIMED THE POLL WAS A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO DIMINISH CFP STRENGTH IN THE PUBLIC EYE. HAVING BEEN CRITICIZED BY THE CFP THE DAY BEFORE, THE POLLSTER INTEMPERATELY BLAMED THE BOMBING ON BUCARAM. BOTH LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE LEADERS IN QUITO TOLD EMBOFF, HOWEVER, THAT THEY SUSPECTED THE AUTHORS WERE MORE LIKELY THE SAME GOVERNMENT GOONS RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHER RECENT POLITICAL BOMBINGS, TRYING TO GIVE THE POLITICIANS EXACTLY THE SAME PUBLIC IMAGE THAT KAROLYS SAID THEY DESERVED. THEY CHARACTERIZED THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THE

GOE DECLARATIONS, THE CFP CRITICISM AND THE BOMBING, AS TOO NEAT BY HALF. A LIBERAL POWER, ARSENIO VIVANCO, FURTHER TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE WOULD PROPOSE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MUTUAL CONSULTATION ACCORD AMONG ALL POLITICAL GROUPS WITH WHICH TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST SIMILAR PROVOCATIONS IN THE FUTURE.

6. IN AN EFFORT TO REASSURE, ADMIRAL VICTOR HUGO GARCES, THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF ADMINISTRATION, INSISTED BLUNTLY IN A QUITO PRESS CONFERENCE MARCH 27 THAT THE RUMORS ABOUT DELAYS OR REVERSAL OF THE RETORNO PROCESS WERE ALL FALSE AND THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD ON SCHEDULE JULY 16. HE ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL HAD BEEN NAMED AND THAT

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THE TRIBUNAL WOULD QUICKLY RESUME ITS ACTIVITIES.

7. COMMENT: ONCE AGAIN ADMIRAL POVEDA, THROUGH GARCES, HAS STEPPED IN TO GIVE A PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST TO THE PROCESS. AND DESPITE THE CONCERNS OF THE PAST WEEK MOST POLITICALLY AWARE ECUADOREANS ARE STILL OPTIMISTIC THAT THE ELECTIONS AND THE SURRENDER OF POWER TO CIVILIANS WILL TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED. MOST BELIEVE THAT IN SPITE OF THE HOPES OF CERTAIN ELEMENTS WITHIN THE MILITARY TO RETAIN POWER, AND THEIR EFFORTS TO INCREASE THESE POSSIBILITIES, RETORNO HAS DEVELOPED SUCH A MOMENTUM THAT ANY EFFORTS NOW TO DERAIL IT WILL PROBABLY MEET WITH FAILURE. HOWEVER, THE STATEMENTS OF JARRIN AND KAROLYS AND THE BOMBING, BE THEY COINCIDENTAL IN TIMING OR CONCERTED, HAVE CAUSED SOBER REFLECTION BY SOME POLITICIANS, AS EVIDENCED BY VIVANCO'S MUSING. ALTHOUGH WE DOUBT THAT THE TWO MEN COORDINATED THEIR COMMENTS, THE STATEMENTS COULD REFLECT THE VIEWS AND INTERESTS OF MILITARY ELEMENTS ON WHICH THEY DEPEND. BOTH ARE CONSIDERED BEHOLDEN TO GENERAL DURAN AND MOST SPECULATION TIES DURAN INTO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED BOMBINGS.

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